Last week, we took a long look at fighting with two weapons. This week, we'll briefly examine the joys of fighting with a double weapon, then we'll move on to a few examples of two-weapon fighting and wrap up by considering a few related topics.

Fighting with a Double Weapon

As noted in Part One, a double weapon has a striking, cutting, or piercing implement at each end. When creating a masterwork or magical double weapon, you need to pay the appropriate costs for each end of the weapon.

Many people work very hard at making double weapons complex and difficult to use in play. There's no need to agonize over a double weapon, however. In combat, you can use just one end of a double weapon or both ends. If you choose to use both ends, you resolve the attacks exactly as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. (One of the examples in the following sections uses a double weapon.)

If you choose to use only one end of a double weapon, you get to choose which end to use (though some double weapons have identical game statistics). No matter which end you choose, you wield the double weapon in two hands and you gain 1-1/2 times your Strength bonus on damage from a hit. This feature makes double weapons particularly useful. You can employ both ends when you can use the full attack action. When you're limited to the attack action (such as when you must use a move action to get within melee reach of your foe), you can use just one end and wield the weapon in two hands for a little extra damage.

Two-Weapon Fighting Examples

The concepts presented so far in this series ought to become clear with the following examples.

Fighting with Two One-Handed Weapons: Alcantar is a 7th-level human fighter with a Strength score of 16, the Two-Weapon Fighting feat, the Weapon Focus (longsword) feat, and the Weapon Specialization (longsword) feat.

Alcantar has a base attack bonus of +7, a Strength bonus of +3, and two longswords, one with +2 enhancement and one masterwork.

If Alcantar chooses to fight with both longswords, he takes a -4 penalty for both his primary and off hands (see Table 8-10 on page 160 in the *Player's Handbook*). With the full attack action, he'll get two attacks with his primary hand (thanks to his +7 base attack bonus) and one attack with his off hand. If he uses the *+2 longsword* in his primary hand, the following bonuses and penalties apply to attacks with primary hand: +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, +1 weapon focus, -4 two-weapon fighting. The base attack bonus for the two attacks will be +7/+2. Alcantar gets his full +3 damage bonus from Strength for hits with his primary hand.

If Alcantar uses the masterwork longsword in his off hand, the following bonuses and penalties apply to attacks with the off hand: +3 Strength, +1 masterwork, +1 weapon focus, -4 two-weapon fighting. The base attack bonus for the single attack will be +7, and Alcantar gets only half of the +3 damage bonus (rounds down to +1) from Strength for hits with his off hand.

The table below shows the attack and damage bonuses for Alcantar's two-weapon attacks:

Attacks and Bonus Damage*

| Primary hand | +9/+4 | 1d8+7 |
| Off hand | +8 | 1d8+3 |

*The damage bonus for the weapon in the primary hand is +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, and +2 weapon specialization. The damage bonus for the weapon in the off hand is +1 Strength (1/2 of +3) and +2 weapon specialization.

Fighting with a One-Handed Weapon and a Light Weapon: Let'ssuppose Alcantar has the same ability scores and feats as in the previous example, but he decides to use a masterwork short sword in his off hand rather than a masterwork longsword.

Alcantar takes a -2 penalty for both his primary and off hands. With the full attack action, he'll get two attacks with the longsword in his primary hand and the following bonuses and penalties apply: +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, +1 weapon focus, -2 two-weapon fighting. The base attack bonus for the two attacks will be +7/+2.

With the masterwork short sword in his off hand, the following bonuses and penalties apply: +3 Strength, +1 masterwork, -2 two-weapon fighting. The base attack bonus for the single attack will be +7.

The table below shows the attack and damage bonuses for Alcantar's two-weapon attacks:

Attacks and Bonus Damage*

| Primary hand | +11/+6 | 1d8+7 |
| Off hand | +9 | 1d6+1 |

*The damage bonus for the weapon in the primary hand is +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, and +2 weapon specialization. The damage bonus for the weapon in the off hand is +1 Strength (1/2 of +3).

Fighting with a Double Weapon: Now let'ssuppose Alcantar has the same ability scores as in the first example and the following feats: Two-Weapon Fighting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (two-bladed sword), Weapon Focus (two-bladed sword), and Weapon Specialization (two-bladed sword).

Let's also assume that Alcantar has a two-bladed sword that has one end with a +2 enhancement bonus and one end that's just masterwork. The bonuses and penalties when Alcantar attacks with both ends of the two-bladed sword are mostly the same as in the previous example, except that Alcantar gain the benefits of his Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization for both ends of the weapon. The two-bladed sword also deals a little more damage, as shown below:

Attacks and Bonus Damage*

Primary hand	+11/+6	1d8+7
Off hand	+10	1d8+3

*The damage bonus for the double weapon's primary end is +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, +2 weapon specialization. The damage bonus for the double weapon's off-hand end is +1 Strength (1/2 of +3) and +2 weapon specialization.

Two-Weapon Fighting Miscellany

Here are a few thoughts on some additional topics related to two-handed fighting.

Ways to Maintain Armor Class

One of the biggest drawbacks to fighting with both hands is the Armor Class hit you take for giving up a shield. You can compensate for that in several ways.

Using an Animated Shield: The animated shield property is fairly expensive (equivalent to increasing the enhancement bonus by +2), but it frees up both your hands while you still get the Armor Class bonus from the shield. Unfortunately, you also get any penalties associated with the shield, included the armor check penalty that applies to attacks you make in conjunction with the Weapon Finesse feat.

Using a Buckler: You can wear a buckler strapped to your forearm and use that arm to wield a weapon. That arm could wield your off-hand weapon or you can use it to wield a two-handed weapon. You take a -1 penalty on attacks you make with the arm where you have the buckler (even if it's just one of two hands you use to wield a two-handed weapon).

If you attack with the arm bearing the buckler, you don't get the Armor Class bonus from the buckler, but at least you gain the shield bonus when you aren't attacking. You lose the shield bonus from the time you declare the attack with your buckler arm. You don't regain the shield bonus until the beginning of your next turn.

Using a Shield Bash: You can use a light or heavy shield (with or without a shield spike) as an off-hand weapon in a two-weapon attack. A heavy shield counts as a one-handed weapon. A light shield counts as a light weapon. As with a buckler, you lose the shield's armor bonus when you make an attack with it. The Improved Shield Bash feat, however, allows you to retain the shield's Armor Class bonus while you bash with it.

Using the Two-Weapon Defense Feat: This feat gives you a +1 shield bonus to your Armor Class when you wield two weapons or a double weapon. You need only hold the weapons or double weapon to gain the shield bonus. If you're fighting defensively or using the total defense action, the shield bonus from the feat increases to +2.

Using the Advanced Two-Weapon Fighting Feats

The Improved Two-Weapon Fighting and Greater Two-Weapon Fighting feats allow you extra attacks with your off-hand. Improved Two-Weapon Fighting gets you one extra off-hand attack at a -5 penalty. Greater Two-Weapon Fighting gets you a third extra off-hand attack at a -10 penalty. Here's an example of these two feats in action:

> **From page 124 of the *Player's Handbook:***
>
> **Buckler:** This small metal shield is worn strapped to your forearm. You can use a bow or crossbow without penalty while carrying it. You can also use your shield arm to wield a weapon (whether you are using an off-hand weapon or using your off hand to help wield a two-handed weapon), but you take a -1 penalty on attack rolls while doing so because of the extra weight on your arm. This penalty stacks with those that may apply for fighting with your off hand and for fighting with two weapons. In any case, if you use a weapon in your off hand, you don't get the buckler's AC bonus for the rest of the round.
>
> You can't bash someone with a buckler.

Let's assume our buddy Alcantar is now an 11th-level human fighter with a Strength score of 16, and the following feats: Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (two-bladed sword), and Weapon Specialization (two-bladed sword).

Let's also assume Alcantar has a two-bladed sword with a +2 enhancement bonus at each end.

Alcantar has a base attack bonus of +11 and a Strength bonus of +3.

If Alcantar chooses to fight with both ends of his two-bladed sword, he takes a -2 penalty for both the primary and off-hand ends. With the full attack action, he'll get three attacks with the primary end thanks to his +11 base attack bonus (+11/+6/+1), plus three with the off-hand end as well (also +11/+6/+1). Thanks to his equipment and feats, the following bonuses and penalties apply to both hands: +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, +1 weapon focus, -2 two-weapon fighting. The table shows the attacks and damage:

Attacks and Bonus Damage*

Primary hand	+15/+10/+5	1d8+7
Off hand	+15/+10/+5	1d8+5

*The damage bonuses for the primary end are +3 Strength, +2 enhancement, and +2 weapon specialization. The damage bonuses for the off-hand end are +1 Strength (1/2 of +3), +2 enhancement, and +2 weapon specialization.

In Conclusion

That wraps up our look at two-weapon fighting. Hopefully you have an easier time untangling any situations

involving two-handed combatants and have a few ideas regarding the use of these rules for your character.

About the Author

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